

Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-14

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EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15

SAM-01 DRC-01 /140 W

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R 010730Z FEB 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9442

INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 1175

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH

SUBJ: PEOPLE'S DAILY ATTACK ON ANTONIONI FILM

REF: HONG KONG 1063

SUMMARY: PEKING'S CRITICISM OF ANTONIONI' FILM "CHINA" STRIKES A SHARP NATIONALISTIC TONE. MORE EVIDENCE IS APPEARING WHICH SUGGESTS THAT THE JAN. 30 PEOPLE'S DAILY TIRADE HAS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. HAVING READ THE FULL TEXT OF THE PEOPLE'S DAILY "COMMENTATOR" ATTACK ON ANTONIONI'S FILM "CHINA" (REFTEL) WE ARE STRUCK BY ITS SHARP NATIONALISTIC FLAVOR. THE UNUSUAL LENGTH OF THE TIRADE ALSO INDICATES THE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO IT AS DOES THE ARTICLE'S INSISTENCE THAT CRITICISM OF THE FILM "IS A SERIOUS STRUGGLE ON THE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL FRONT THAT MERITS SERIOUS ATTENTION."

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2. PEOPLE'S DAILY HARPS ON THE FILM'S ALLEGED INSULT TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE EVEN MORE THAN ON ITS ALLEGED SLANDER OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIETY. THE ARTICLE CLAIMS THAT ANTONIONI DESCRIBES THE CHINESE PEOPLE AS "A MASS OF HUMAN

BEINGS WHO ARE STUPID AND IGNORANT...ARE LISTLESS, PAY NO ATTENTION TO HYGIENE, LOVE GLUTTONY AND PLEASURE SEEKING." DRAGGING IN RACIAL SENSIBILITIES, "COMMENTATOR" CHARGES THAT ANTONIONI, "WITH EUROPEAN PRIDE...DELIBERATELY DEFAMES" AND INSULTS THE CHINESE PEOPLE. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH THE DEFIANT MAO QUOTE, "LET THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN REACTIONARIES TREMBLE BEFORE US* LET THEM SAY THAT WE ARE NOT GOOD AT THIS AND NOT GOOD AT THAT; WE THE CHINESE PEOPLE WILL STADILY REACH OUR GOAL BY OUR INDOMITABLE EFFORTS."

3. THE COMMENT ON THE SHOWING OF THE FILM IN THE US CONSISTS OF ONLY ONE PASSAGE OUT OF A TOTAL OF ABOUT 28 PARAGRAPHS AND FOLLOWS THE CHARGE THAT THE "SOVIET REVISIONIST RENEGADE CLIQUE IS THE SPEARHEAD AND CHIEF BOSS BEHIND THE SCENES IN INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CHINA ACTIVITIES." WHILE THE BULK OF THE ARTICLE IS DEVOTED TO DETAILING ANTONIONI'S ALLEGED DISTORTIONS, THE MORAL STILL SEEMS TO BE THAT WHILE THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP CONSTITUTES THE MAIN ANTI-CHINA FORCE IN THE WORLD TODAY, HOSTILITY TO CHINA ALSO LURKS JUST UNDER THE SURFACE IN THE US AND OTHER WESTERN CAPITALIST COUNTRIES. THE ARTICLE SUMS UP WITH THE STATEMENT THAT THE ANTONIONI FILM "REMINDS US TO CONTINUE BEING SOBER MINDED AND NEVER FORGET THERE ARE ALWAYS FORCES HOSTILE TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD AND SHARP AND COMPLICATED STRUGGLES CONTINUE ALTHOUGH THE INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC SITUATION IS EXCELLENT."

4. THE FILM WAS SHOWN BY THE ITALIAN CONSULATE HERE LAST MAY. AT THAT TIME THE LOCAL COMMUNIST PRESS CARRIED CRITICAL BUT RESTRAINED REVIEWS. THE TA KUNG PAO, FOR EXAMPLE ON MAY 4, IN ITS MOST NEGATIVE COMMENT CONCLUDED THAT THE FILM WAS "TRIVIAL," "DULL AND SOMETIMES NONSENSICAL." A MEMBER OF THE ITALIAN CONSULATE REMARKED THAT ONLY A FEW WEEKS AGO PERCY CHEN, PEKING'S LEADING BOURGEOIS FRONT MAN IN HONG KONG, HAD PRIVATELY PRAISED THE FILM. WE ALSO NOTE PRESS REPORTS THAT ANTONIONI HIMSELF HAS SAID THAT SOME CHINESE OFFICIALS CONGRATULATED HIM ON THE WORK.

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5. LOCAL CADRE SEEM CONFUSED. AT A DINNER LAST NIGHT A CONGEN OFFICER ASKED NCNA VICE CHIEF, MO TAO, WHAT ACCOUNTED FOR THE DELAY IN PEOPLE'S DAILY'S CRITICISM. MO SAID WEAKLY THAT IT PROBABLY TOOK TIME FOR REPORTS OF THE FILM TO GET BACK TO CHINA. HE AND OTHER CADRE AT THE SAME GATERING SAID FAVORABLE THINGS ABOUT A MORE RECENT ABC DOCUMENTARY ON CHINA, IMPLYING THAT ABC WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE PENALIZED FOR HAVING SHOWN THE ITALIAN FILM. ANOTHER CADRE REFUSED TO GIVE AN OPINION ON THE

LATEST ABC FILM EVEN THOUGH HE HAD SEEN IT.
ALLEN

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